

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 70

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA IMMEDIATE

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 2197

CANBERRA FOR ASST SECY INGERSOLL

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, JA

SUBJ: VICE MINISTER HOGEN DISMISSED

SUMMARY: VICE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS SHINSAKU HOGEN FEB 19 ANNOUNCED THAT HE WAS BEING REPLACED IMMEDIATELY BY DEPUTY VICE MINISTER TOGO. DIRGEN FOR AMERICAN AFFAIRS OKAWARA CONFIRMED TO CHARGE THAT HOGEN WAS SACRIFICE OFFERED IN HOPE OF STEMMING INTRA-LDP FACTIONAL ATTACK ON TANAKA-OHIRA LEADERSHIP. WE DO NOT EXPECT SHIFT TO TOGO WILL MEAN BASIC CHANGES IN GOJ POLICIES TOWARD U.S. END SUMMARY.

1. MOFA VICE MINISTER HOGEN ABRUPTLY ANNOUNCED TO SENIOR STAFF IN MINISTRY EARLY FEB 19 THAT HE WAS BEING REPLACED EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY BY DEPUTY VICE MINISTER FUMIHIKO TOGO.

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2. DURING MEETING ON OTHER SUBJECT AT FONOFF THIS

NOON WITH DIRGEN FOR AMERICAN AFFAIRS OKAWARA, HE COMMENTED TO CHARGE THAT HOGEN HAD BEEN MADE SCAPEGOAT FOR YASUKAWA- OHIRA GAFF DURING WASHINGTON PRESS CONFERENCE REGARDING TIMING OF IMPERIAL VISIT TO U.S. OKAWARA AGREED THAT THIS DRASTIC ACTION SIGNIFIES THAT TANAKA GOVT FEELS ITSELF TO BE IN SHAKY POSITION. OKAWARA SAID THAT IN EFFORT TO SAVE THAT POSITION, DECISION WAS MADE BY PRIMIN TANAKA, FONMIN OHIRA AND SUPPORTERS FEB 18 TO QTE OFFER HOGEN AS SACRIFICIAL LAMB UNQTE. OKAWARA COMMENTED THAT THE HOGEN MOVE DID NOT STEM SOLELY FROM RECENT WASHINGTON PRESS STATEMENTS, BUT MUST BE VIEWED AGAINST BACKGROUND OF FAIRLY LONG STRING OF INCIDENTS DRAWING PUBLIC CRITICISM, PRESS WAILING, AND INTRAPARTY GRUMBLING ABOUT INEPT AND ILL-INFORMED MANAGEMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (E.G., MOSCOW COMMUNIQUE LANGUAGE ERRORS, UNFAVORABLE REACTIONS TO TANAKA SEA TRIP, HANDLING OF ME AND ENERGY CRISIS, STUTTERING PROGRESS ON CHINA CIVAIR AGREEMENT).

3. OKAWARA ALSO EXPRESSED GLOOMY PERSONAL ESTIMATE THAT IT IS DOUBTFUL WHETHER THE HOGEN GESTURE WILL IN FACT BRING AN END TO INTRAPARTY FACTIONAL ATTACKS ON TANAKA THROUGH PRESSURE ON OHIRA. HE OBSERVED THAT IF THE GOVT WERE IN A STRONG POSITION, IT WOULD BE ABLE TO DEAL FIRMLY WITH THESE FACTIONAL ATTACKS BY SEIRANKAI AND OTHER ANTI-TANAKA AND OHIRA ELEMENTS WITHIN PARTY.

4. OKAWARA INDICATED THAT TOGO IS ALREADY IN OFFICE. HOGEN WILL REMAIN AN ADVISOR TO FOREIGN MINISTER, AS IN CASE OF FORMER AMBASSADOR TO U.S. USHIBA, AND HOGEN REMARKED TO HIS STAFF DURING COURSE HIS FAREWELL THAT HE HOPES NOW TO BE IN BETTER POSITION TO SPEAK OUT MORE CLEARLY AND FIRMLY ON THE QTE REQUIREMENTS OF JAPAN'S FOREIGN POLICY UNQTE. OKAWARA SAID FULL IMPLICATIONS OF THIS SHIFT WITHIN MINISTRY AS YET UNCLEAR, BUT IT IS EXPECTED TOGO'S ELEVATION WILL TRIGGER A NUMBER OF REASSIGNMENTS AT THE AMBASSADORIAL LEVEL. HE STATED EMPHATICALLY, HOWEVER, THAT THIS WILL NOT MEAN RE-ASSIGNMENT OF AMBASSADOR YASUKAWA, WHO MUST STAY IN CONFIDENTIAL

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PLACE OR QTE THE WHOLE SCENARIO UNQTE WILL COME APART. SINCE OHIRA AND YASUKAWA WERE TOGETHER IN PRESS CONFERENCE WHERE OFFENDING STATEMENTS MADE, SACKING YASUKAWA WOULD LEAD TOO DIRECTLY TO THE PERSON OF OHIRA.

5. COMMENT: THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT MANY IN FOREIGN OFFICE, LIKE OKAWARA, WHO HAVE A HIGH REGARD FOR HOGEN

HAVE BEEN DEEPLY SHAKEN BY HIS SUDDEN DEPARTURE. WE WOULD EXPECT MOST OF THEM WILL ACCEPT NEW DEVELOPMENT MORE OR LESS PHILOSOPHICALLY, HOWEVER, IN THE SENSE OF OKAWARA'S APPARENT FEELING THAT, WHILE HOGEN'S DEMISE IS DEEPLY REGRETTABLE, IT SEEMS TO BE THE WAY JAPANESE POLITICIANS PLAY THEIR GAMES.

6. THE NEW VICE MINISTER, TOGO, OF COURSE, HAS LONG BEEN WELL KNOWN TO MANY SENIOR MEMBERS OF AMERICAN FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMUNITY. HE HAS A STRONG RECORD OF COMMITMENT TO THE U.S. PARTNERSHIP AND ITS PRIMACY IN JAPANESE FOREIGN POLICY, AND HAS WORKED IN CLOSE COOPERATION WITH US IN CONNECTION WITH MANY PROBLEMS IN THE POSTWAR RELATIONSHIP. WE EXPECT THAT HE WILL GENERALLY CONTINUE POLICY ORIENTATION OF HOGEN AND WILL BRING NO CHANGE IN JAPAN'S POLICIES TOWARD THE U.S.

7. IT SEEMS TO US CLEAR THAT FIRING HOGEN WAS NOT RELATED BASICALLY TO THE MINOR SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES INVOLVED. IT IS EQUALLY CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT THIS INCIDENT BARES THE DESPERATELY INSECURE FEELING OF THE TANAKA GOVT AND INDICATES THE LENGTHS TO WHICH THEY FEEL COMPELLED TO RUN SCARED IN THE FACE OF FACTIONAL PRESSURES.

8. AS TO WHY THE OPPOSING FACTIONS ARE MOUNTING THIS INTENSE OFFENSIVE AT THIS TIME, JUST AS LABOR'S SPRING STRUGGLE OPENS AND LDP READYING ITSELF FOR TOUGH UPPER HOUSE CAMPAIGN EFFORT, WE ARE NOT READY TO PROVIDE CONFIDENT ANSWERS. IF THIS IS AN OPPORTUNISTIC EFFORT TO BRING DOWN TANAKA AND GIVE FUKUDA HIS CHANCE, TIMING SEEMS ILL-CHOSEN UNLESS OPPOSING ELEMENTS CALCULATE THAT A CHANGE, PARTICULARLY TOWARD TIGHT

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MONEY FUKUDA, BEFORE THE ELECTION WOULD ENHANCE LDP CHANCES. ON OTHER HAND, IF IT IS PRIMARILY DIRECTED TOWARD THE OUSTING OF OHIRA AND HIS REMOVAL FROM CONTENTION FOR THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP WITH FUKUDA, THE COST SEEMS EQUALLY HIGH. WHATEVER THE UNDERLYING SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HOGEN FIRING, THE FACTIONAL ATMOSPHERE IN THE PARTY CLEARLY SEEMS TENSE AND GEARED FOR SERIOUS BATTLE. WE WILL BE TRYING TO OBTAIN A CLEARER PICTURE OF THE INTRAMURAL SITUATION IN THE COMING DAYS. SHOESMITH

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